

Political dos and don'ts for military, civilians

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Although the 2004 elections are just under a year away, political campaigns are gearing up. Federal employees often wonder whether there are limitations upon their personal involvement in political campaigns. There are, in fact, several restrictions.

While it is DOD policy to encourage employees and members of the Armed Forces to carry out the basic obligations of citizenship, there are statutory limitations placed upon their involvement in politics and political events. These limitations vary depending on the individual's employment status. The limitations for members of the Senior Executive Service, other Federal employees, and members of the Armed Forces are different.

A Federal statute, the Hatch Act, governs civilian employees' participation in the political process.

Some of the things DOD civilian employees may do include:

- ★ Be candidates for public office in *nonpartisan* elections
- ★ Register and vote as they choose
- ★ Assist in voter registration drives
- ★ Express opinions about candidates and issues
- ★ Attend political fundraising functions
- ★ Campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments or municipal ordinances

Some of the things civilian DOD employees (including career members of the Senior Executive Service) may not do include (there are additional restrictions for members of the Senior Executive Service):

- ★ Use official influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election
- ★ Knowingly solicit or discourage the political activity of any person who conducts business with DOD
- ★ Engage in political activity while on duty
- ★ Engage in political activity while in any federal workplace
- ★ Solicit political contributions
- ★ Be a candidate for public office in partisan elections

★ Wear political buttons on duty
Some activities are permitted in "nonpartisan" elections, but not permitted in "partisan" elections. Generally, a "partisan" election means one where the candidates or issues are identified with a political party. Further detail on what is permitted and what is prohibited for civilian employees may be found at www.osc.gov/ha_fed.htm.

Deeply ingrained in our democratic system of government is a basic concept that the military will remain neutral in political issues. Thus, for active duty military personnel the rules are even more restrictive than for civilians. They are set out in detail in Air Force Instruction 51-902, *Political Activities by Members of the US Air Force*.

Some of the activities that Air Force members may engage in include:

- ★ Register to vote, vote and express a personal opinion on political candidates and issues, but not as a representative of the Armed Forces
- ★ Make monetary contributions to a political organization or political committee favoring a particular candidate or slate of candidates, subject to certain limitations
- ★ Attend political meetings or rallies as a spectator when not in uniform
- ★ Join a political organization and attend its meetings when not in uniform
- ★ Sign a petition for specific legislative action or a petition to place a candidate's name on an official election ballot, if the signing does not obligate the member to engage in partisan political activity and is done as a private citizen and not as a representative of the Armed Forces
- ★ Display a political sticker on the member's private vehicle or wear a political button when not in uniform and not on duty

Some of the activities that an AF member on active duty may not engage in include:

- ★ Use official authority or influence to interfere with an election or solicit political contributions from others

★ Be a candidate for, or hold civil office, except in limited situations authorized in AFI 51-902

★ Participate in partisan political management, campaigns, or conventions or make public speeches in the course of such activity

★ Allow, or cause to be published, partisan political articles signed or authorized by the member for soliciting votes for or against a partisan political party or candidate

★ Speak before a partisan political gathering of any kind for promoting a partisan political party or candidate

★ Participate in any radio, television or other program or group discussion as an advocate of a partisan political party or candidate

★ Distribute partisan political literature
★ Solicit or otherwise engage in fund-raising activities in federal offices or facilities, including military reservations, for a partisan political cause or candidate

★ March or ride in a partisan political parade

★ Attend, as an official representative of the Armed Forces, partisan political events, even without actively participating

★ Make campaign contributions to a partisan political candidate

★ Use contemptuous words in public against the president, the vice-president, the congress, the secretary of defense, the secretary of a military department, the secretary of transportation or the governor or legislature of a state

★ Display a large political sign, banner or poster on the top or side of a member's private vehicle (as distinguished from a political bumper sticker)

The dos and don'ts set out above are not all inclusive. More complete explanations of what is permitted and what is not permitted may be obtained by reading Air Force Instruction 51-902 and from materials available through the following Web site: www.afmc-pub.wpafb.af.mil/HQ-AFMC/JA/lo/lojaf/ethics/updates/index.htm#POLITICS.

For civilian and military personnel, the rules on political activity are a lot to digest. Consider these rules carefully and do not hesitate to contact Mr. Doug Thiesen with any questions you may have, 846-1652.

Report gifts from foreign governments

RANDOLPH AFB, Texas—Officials want to remind Airmen that gifts received from foreign governments valued at more than \$285 must be reported.

Failure to report gifts exceeding \$285 can result in a U.S. District Court penalty equal to the fair market value of the gift plus \$5,000, according to Mr. Frank Posey of the judge advocate's office at the Air Force Personnel Center, here.

All Air Force people, including civilians and family members, need to know that according to the law any gift received from a foreign government is technically U.S. property, he said. "If items received at one time are worth more than \$285, they need to be reported."

Reporting a gift doesn't necessarily mean that it will be taken away. "High value items are usually sent to the General Services Administration's vaults," said Ms. Nancy Gaisford, chief of the special trophies and awards section here, "but people can get permission to keep their gifts on official display or even purchase them back from the GSA."

Gifts must be reported within 60 days of receipt, she said. Gifts received this year or before that are worth more than \$285 must be reported to:

HQ AFPC/DPPPRS
550 C St. West, Ste. 12
Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4714

Gifts received after January 1 must be reported to:

SAF/AA
1720 Air Force Pentagon
Washington D.C. 20330-1720

Provider messages added to medical clinic appointment system

Open access appointing in the 377th Medical Group clinic is new to Kirtland AFB and, based on customer comments, several changes have been made to improve this program.

Patients can now leave messages for their primary care management team by calling the appointment desk at 846-3200.

Patients are especially encouraged to leave messages in the following circumstances to avoid unnecessary use of appointments:

- ★ Refills of certain allergy medications—when the patient has no history of asthma
- ★ Refills of birth control pills—if the patient has

no history of abnormal PAP smears

★ Obstetrics referrals and pregnancy test results
★ Requests for lab tests prior to an upcoming visit with a provider

★ Messages to advise a provider of an emergency visit (other than to the Veterans Affairs Medical Center Emergency Department) and

★ Requests for replacement parts for sleep apnea equipment

There are, of course, some situations in which your provider will ask you to make an appointment. This is necessary to ensure that you get the quality care you deserve.

Laboratory, University of New Mexico join forces

Improving chemical lasers is just one of the expected outcomes from a collaboration starting between the University of New Mexico and the Air Force Research Laboratory.

Providing research opportunities for graduate students and developing a pipeline for future laser scientists are other outcomes from a three-year Cooperative Research and Development Agreement that was signed Dec. 9 by the laboratory's Directed Energy Directorate and the university.

Research will be conducted at the directorate's Kirtland AFB Chemical Laser Facility using directorate scientists working with university professors and graduate students. Their research will focus on the how chemicals flow within a laser system; how those chemicals are mixed in subsonic and supersonic nozzles and interact with each other.

Chemical lasers include the Chemical Oxygen Iodine Laser and All Gas-Phase Iodine Laser. Both were invented at Kirtland AFB by directorate scientists. Also included are the Hydrogen Fluoride Laser, Deuterium Fluoride Laser and high-speed flow

discharge lasers, all of which use the interaction of various chemicals to produce a reaction or reaction that generates laser light. Researchers will be observing, measuring and analyzing these chemical flows and their mixing, with results expected to improve the operation of all these lasers.

For this research, the directorate will be using some of its world-class capabilities, including a \$250,000, one-of-a-kind, state-of-the-art planar laser-induced fluorescence—an instrument that looks at chemicals as they are combined. It is used to tell how well chemical mixing nozzles are working.

According to Dr. Gordon Hager, technical advisor for the directorate's Chemical Laser Branch and the individual overseeing this agreement, "We all gain from the arrangement. Not only does the technology advance, but this opens the door for the university to gain additional federal research monies. It will also provide a training ground that will help turn students into future scientists in a technology area that doesn't often offer students this kind of an opportunity."



Photo by Todd Berenger

Tyrone Palmer performs general repairs and tune-ups on bicycles at the 377th Services Squadron's Bicycle Worx in Outdoor Recreation.

Tyrone Palmer: The man behind the spokes at Bicycle Worx

BY JENNIFER E. WEST

Nucleus staff writer

Bring 'em on—your child's banged-up bike or your serious adult bicycle. Tyrone Palmer, the man behind the spokes as it were, will get that rolling hunk of metal in tiptop shape at the Bicycle Worx, a shop operated through the 377th Services Squadron.

An active duty Air Force technical sergeant in the 58th Maintenance Squadron Armament Flight in his full-time career, Mr. Palmer is a part-time flex employee making TEAM KIRTLAND bicycles safe and roadworthy.

"I've been tinkering with bikes since I was eight years old," Mr. Palmer explained. His military father wasn't always at home to assist in repairing his bikes, so Mr. Palmer learned how to handle the job for himself. Consequently, his experience and interest grew into a marketable ability.

"My first tool set was a socket set (for bike repair)," Mr. Palmer explained.

After arriving in New Mexico for his current Air Force assignment, Mr. Palmer called the new base bicycle shop—open about six months then—to get help protecting his bicycle against the inevitable onslaught of repairs caused by New Mexico's crown jewel of stickers, the "goathead." But that call evolved into a discussion of his abilities and

expertise in working with bikes and, eventually, his employment at Bicycle Worx.

Now Mr. Palmer solves your goathead problems.

Goatheads are a scourge of cyclists, barefooted children and anybody who has tracked even one into their house. But the good news is that Mr. Palmer can ward off flat tires with Bicycle Worx's installation of "Green Slime" and special thorn-resistant tire liners and tubes. The premium service costs, at the most, \$30 for both wheels for slime, liners and tubes but slime alone is only \$5 a tire.

Among services done by Mr. Palmer are the "once over," a repair evaluation, minor bolt tightening, seat and handle bar adjustment, the "Deluxe Fight the Flat and Basic Tune" for \$50 and some specific repairs with part replacements or special services.

"Each bike has it's own personality," Mr. Palmer said. General mechanics aside, he added, every bike from fancy to simple is different. But, he notes that his natural mechanical aptitude, coupled with his military training and experience helps the self-described "concentration junkie" to zero in on your bike's trouble spots.

Bicycle Worx, in Outdoor Recreation, Building 20410, is open Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Wednesdays, 8 a.m.-2 p.m. The shop is open Saturdays 8 a.m.-noon and is closed Sundays.

DOD launches new Web site focusing on transformation

DOD has established a new Web site focused on transformation.

The site has the same look and feel as the DOD homepage, but concentrates on news in the transformation arena.

"This is another next step in our effort to focus more attention on the Defense Department's priorities," said Chris Willcox, deputy assistant secretary of defense for public liaison. "The first step occurred in October 2001 when DOD introduced its DefendAmerica Web site, www.defend-america.mil, detailing U.S. efforts in the war on terrorism. The next step came this June when DOD revamped its home page, www.dod.mil."

Mr. Willcox said transformation is so vital to DOD's efforts in the global war on terrorism, as well the department's future in general, it's important to have a separate, focused site.

"There is a lot of transformation news out there right now, but it's scattered, and people interested in the topic have to surf many sites to get the total picture. Our goal is to provide that total picture and highlight specific areas in the transformation arena."

Harold Heilsnis, DOD's interim director for Internet operations, explained that the transformation site will highlight the broad range of initiatives in the transformation arena, to include policy, equipment, training, people and programs.

"Visitors to the site will see the DOD perspective, as well as what the individual services and service members are achieving in the transformation area," Mr. Heilsnis said. "There are so many interesting stories to tell in the broad category of transformation. This effort gives us a new venue for getting those stories to both our internal military and civilian audience and to the general public."

The transformation site is located at www.DoD.mil/transformation.